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OST 2000-7182-1018

THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

July 26, 2004

The Honorable Tom Harkin
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-1502

Dear Senator Harkin:

Thank you for your letter of June 30 supporting the application of Northwest Airlines for exemptions from the high density rule at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA) for nonstop services to Des Moines, IA.

As you know, as a result of the recent decision of Midwest Airlines to cease service between Des Moines and DCA, on June 3, the U.S. Department of Transportation issued a notice starting a proceeding for reallocation of the slot exemptions. Applications were due by June 24 and comments were due by July 1. The Department will apply the selection standards outlined in Vision 100--Century of Aviation Reauthorization Act, P.L. 108-176 and the Wendell H. Ford Aviation Investment and Reform Act for the 21st Century (AIR-21) and described in the Notice.

Since this matter is pending before the Department, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the merits of any of the applications. However, I assure you that the Department will consider all relevant factors in reaching a decision on this matter.

As is our normal practice, I am placing a copy of your letter and my response in Docket OST-2000-7182 as a contact outside the record of the case. I appreciate your interest in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Norman Y. Mineta'. The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping 'N' and 'M'.

Norman Y. Mineta

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1502
June 30, 2004

The Honorable Norman Mineta
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
400 7th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Mineta:

I am writing in strong support of the application by Northwest Airlines to receive landing rights for a non-stop flight between Des Moines International Airport and Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. As you know two slots become available as Midwest Airlines discontinues its flight service between the two cities.

In the 2000 Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization, Senator Grassley and I were involved in the creation of the legislative language concerning the allocation of slots at Reagan National Airport. As we desired, the Department of Transportation (DOT) allocated the slots to Des Moines with Midwest Airlines providing that service. The modifications in the criteria that eliminated the entrant air carrier and incumbent air carrier provisions in Vision 100 legally clears the way for the Department to allocate the slots again for Des Moines to Reagan National service with Northwest as a carrier.

I believe that the Department should clearly give preference to Northwest's application for service from Des Moines to National Airport. The service would be a continuation of the service granted in 2000. The non-stop route is extremely useful for many business and government employees traveling to and from Iowa's capital to our nation's capital. I have received many letters from my constituents that call for the continuation of this route.

Midwest ceased operation of the flight due to financial losses. By using a 44-passenger regional jet, Northwest will substantially lower the operating costs of the service. While Northwest hopes to see an increase in traffic loads, the passenger volume experienced by Midwest Airlines indicates that the route is economically viable with a smaller aircraft and Northwest should be able to continue the service in the long term.

I urge the DOT to award the two slots for continued service to Des Moines. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Harkin". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tom Harkin
United States Senator